



Mark Atkinson
Director General
Haig House
199 Borough High Street
London, SE1 1AA

Private Office

Complaint: Hythe Armed Forces Day 2026

Thank you for your patience whilst we conducted an investigation into what happened during Hythe Armed Forces Day 2026 in order to be able to answer your complaint.

I have now received copies of all of the relevant information which I am drawing on in my reply to the complaint you raised:

Hythe town council requested support from RBL Hythe and Saltwood to run an Armed Forces Day event on Saturday 21st June. There were three planning meetings for the event – two were led by the Chair of RBL Hythe and Saltwood – representatives of Hythe Town Council also attended these meetings.

In the first meeting it was agreed that community groups relevant to the armed forces would be invited to have stalls at the event. One of the groups who approached the organising committee to hold a stall was the local Reform UK branch. The representative of the local Reform UK branch said that they would be there in a 'non-party political' capacity and would be raising money for local veterans charities. It was not clear which charities would be the recipient of funds raised.

Clearly, it was an error of judgement by the Chair of RBL Hythe and Saltwood not to recognise that a political party could never appropriately raise funds for charity. He has now acknowledged this error. He has no personal links to Reform and is very concerned that he has inadvertently endangered RBL's good name in this incident. We will maintain contact with the Chair who is also the voluntary Poppy Appeal organiser for the area and continue to support the branch to ensure they have a better understanding of the risks of political association.

Members of RBL Hythe and Saltwood and Hythe Town Council were present throughout Hythe Armed Forces Day and RBL had prominent banners and authorised fundraising points displayed on their own stalls.

No one present on the day raised concerns about the presence of Reform UK or their activities. The Reform UK stall did not carry any RBL branding or merchandise. Those on the stall were not wearing RBL branded clothing. The home-made fundraising banner was not pre-agreed or authorised by RBL locally or nationally.

During the event, the Chair of RBL Hythe and Saltwood was unaware of Reform UK's fundraising activities. At the end of the day, several stall holders made donations to RBL including the stall holder of the Reform UK stall. Half of the donated monies were given to the Poppy Appeal and half were given to the local RBL branch – they totalled £70.

The Charity Commission has very strict rules on the circumstances in which a charity is permitted to return a donation (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accepting-refusing-and-returning-donations-to-your-charity#donations-you-must-refuse-or-return>) We have considered whether this donation: *has features or conditions that may undermine your charity's independence. For example, the donation comes with a condition that would require trustees to agree key decisions*

Patron: His Majesty The King

Registered Address: Royal British Legion, Haig House, 199 Borough High Street, London SE1 1AA | britishlegion.org.uk

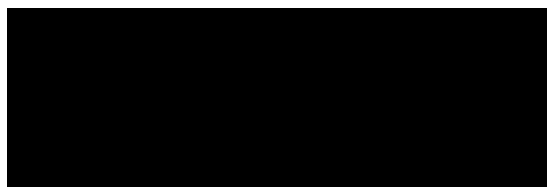
Registered charity number: 219279

with the donor. We do not believe that the donation made in any way undermines RBL's independence as it was made with no conditions and we were not aware, until receiving your complaint, that the individual who made the donation had a link to a political party.

RBL cares about our political neutrality and we consistently take steps to ensure it is maintained. In the previous 12 months, RBL has twice directly issued guidance to staff and members about political contact; we have also additionally communicated the guidance in writing and through presentations to the senior leadership of our Membership; the guidance forms part of our Membership Handbook. We wrote to the Chairs of all major UK political parties, including Reform UK, in March 2026 asking them to protect RBL's political independence, asking them to: *'ensure that the poppy, or other RBL and Poppyscotland names, logos or imagery, do not appear on election campaigning materials.'* Similar letters have been sent to political parties in previous years. We will continue to remind all staff, Members and political parties of their responsibilities to safeguard RBL's reputation.

More directly, on 24th June 2026, in response to concerns raised locally regarding Reform UK's activities at Hythe Armed Forces Day, Caye Gould, RBL Membership Council Representative for the South Eastern Region emailed Reform UK – Folkestone and Hythe branch asking them not to associate with RBL nor to fundraise for us.

I believe I have addressed the key points you raise in your letter of complaint. Thank you for making us aware of this incident. We are working hard to protect the trusted name of the Royal British Legion and we are grateful for your ongoing support.



Mark Atkinson
Director General

cc. Caye Gould, Membership Council Representative
Nina Villa, Executive Director of Members, Armed Forces and Community Engagement
Gary Ryan, Executive Director of Marketing, Fundraising and Remembrance
Angela Kitching, Director of Policy, Campaigns and Research

Patron: His Majesty The King

Registered Address: Royal British Legion, Haig House, 199 Borough High Street, London SE1 1AA | britishlegion.org.uk
Registered charity number: 219279